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## **The Joint Mission of Latin and German in America.\***

By **H. M. Ferren**, Allegheny High School, Pittsburgh.

The arguments herein set forth are based upon the following introductory theses: 1. A nation's aptitude for learning foreign languages is commensurate with the difficulties of its mother tongue. 2. Our simplified vernacular, having virtually discarded the principle of inflection, therefore does not furnish a sufficient preparation for the ready acquisition of synthetic idioms. 3. Hence Americans who would master German must first be jerked away from the analytical extreme by a powerful synthetic magnet, preferably the Latin.

A gentleman teaching science once remarked to me: "I can understand why you modern language teachers do not share my optimism. The pupils in your subject are at a serious disadvantage, while mine come to me without such handicap." His words conveyed to me a message of deliverance. What a blessing it would be, were we able to dispel the cloud of disapproval hovering over modern language teaching in America by demonstrating that its present barrenness is not directly traceable to faulty methods but is due primarily to certain limitations of the English idiom.

The appellation "grammarless English" is a source of deep chagrin to those inflexible inflectionalists who cling with loving piety to the few surviving landmarks of a once synthetic tongue. Far from underrating such grammatical revivalists, I welcome their activity as a wholesome antidote for the invertebrate empiricism misnamed "language study" in the lower grades. They sadly err, however, in supposing that a lost synthetic sense can be revived by artificial means. They might as well induce a legless man to dance as make parts of the English organism functionize that have long since been atrophied. No wonder their pupils balk at placing in separate categories what has ceased to be visibly dissimilar. It seems to them like using a lot of pulling and pushing camel-back engines to transport a few cabooses over a horizontal stretch of road.

The English level landscape, with its broad unbending high-ways, offers many attractions but has no real equivalent for the ever changing beauty and the exhilarating air of a rugged mountain region. Unaccustomed to the arduous toils of climbing, the English speaking person avoids the narrow winding trails of the alpine steep ascents, dreading to encounter more resistance there than he found hitherto on his native heath. That is why Americans setting out to scale the heights of German culture rarely rise above its foothills.

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\* Paper read before the Classical Association of Pittsburgh and Vicinity.

Among the valid reasons for Latin in our schools, its role as a linguistic energizer is foremost in importance. A dynamo supplying the acumen needed for mastering synthetic modern tongues cannot be consistently displaced by any one of these. The blissful innocence with which American children sin appallingly against the laws of German grammar is a signal proof of their previous synthetic malnutrition. Another stumbling block for them is the paraphrasing tendency of the analytic English. If not counteracted, it inevitably results in an insipid German style comparable to a drop of mental acid diluted in a tubful of inanity.

Unlike the German people, whose vernacular gives to them an inflectional consciousness, our fellow countrymen attempting an inflected modern language are unable to dispense with a supplementary corrective such as Latin. If the teachers of the Fatherland advance more rapidly in French or English than we do in German, the credit is not all theirs nor ours all the blame. Imperfectly equipped, our students meet with unprecedented hardships, while theirs, prepared for strenuous service, approach an easier task.

This twofold disparity ought to be offset by longer courses and more extensive drillwork than they have abroad. Alas! it is just the other way. We are supposed to haul a heavier load in less than half the time allotted to our foreign colleagues, notwithstanding that we must construct the very roadbed which they find ready at the outset. How much patient plodding this entails, everyone knows who is not misled by the class-room echo of his own loquaciousness.

In spite of such adverse conditions, our educational reformers discover a superfluity where there really is a dearth. Though floundering knee-deep in the mire, these hurry-up apostles condemn all solid turnpikes on account of the delay occasioned by their building. When they say that too much grammar is at the root of all our troubles, I am more incredulous than if a starving pauper accused himself of gluttony, or if Adam complained in Paradise of being overclad.

Granting that the English is an insufficient basis for potential work in German, the question next arises: Why should not German do for us without the aid of Latin what it does at home? More precisely stated: Can a non-Latin course in German become with us a potent factor of nationwide significance? When very soon begun and continued amid most favorable environments, German serves its purpose independently of Latin, but as this arrangement is limited to localities in which a virile German element prevails, it will not be feasible for the country as a whole. Any plan for German, national in scope and aiming to be permanent, dares not reckon with sporadic garden spots that nativistic sandstorms may obliterate over night. The bottom rock on which it must repose is not the fiat of a passing German population but the sanction of the general public

without reference to nativity or descent. The vantage ground for German, above the danger line of local whim or racial bias, is the secondary school. Here the prospects for expansion are most promising. The extension downwards now in progress will some day be paralleled by a corresponding upward growth, culminating in distinctly separate, co-ordinated groups akin to the different types of gymnasia in Europe. It is highly probable that one of these will become the center of a neo-humanistic movement where Latin linked with German may bring about the realization of a cherished dream.

In a lengthened humanistic high school German ought to be preceded and accompanied by Latin. Without an intensified momentum the impact would not be strong enough to overcome the student's grammatical inertia, before his habits of speech have crystallized. During the brief formative period at our disposal, the synthetic ingredient not derivable from the English should be so administered as to insure a complete and quick assimilation. When properly diffused in a Latin-German mixture, the lacking substance will be absorbed more readily and in greater quantity than if it were contained in a double mess of German. In the latter case, owing to an incomplete absorption, the synthetic reconstruction would not be consummated, resulting in so slow a pace for German that its destination could not be attained. I do not think that the exceptions to this rule would justify a widespread deviation from it. Nationally considered, it would be quite as logical to run a locomotive without a fuel tender as to energize the German at the cost of Latin, for the qualitative loss would far outweigh the increment in time. German cannot reach its highest potentiality, unless the dyke protecting it is carefully maintained. To safeguard the German against an inundation of inferior minds, Latin should possess the veto privilege in determining admission to and advancement in a correlated German course. To allow the German classes to be paralyzed by Latin retrogrades, is like pouring water into the leaky vessel of the Danaides.

Let us fondly foster the Latin-German group, for from it may be fashioned the wand that will awaken our slumbering European soul. On the Latin adamant must the German lens be ground that can reveal to us with equal clearness all the civilizations to which we owe our being. As the nations whence we spring should help to shape our future, their customs and traditions cannot be ignored. Yet a piecemeal study of their respective tongues would so divide our efforts that the gigantic problem which confronts us would remain unsolved. Our manifold tributaries must have a common channel broad and deep and swift enough to rush their precious cargoes forward, ere it is too late, into the mighty ocean of American social life. The exalted mission of recovering our European birthright, of welding together what is united but in name, of harmoniz-

ing into a glorious symphony the instruments imperfectly attuned, should inspire us teachers of Latin and of German to rally around the standard of a new-born humanism.

The preference for German in America over other modern languages is a striking instance of a popular verdict founded on philosophic reasoning. The cosmic interest manifested by the Germans along every line of thought in the various trans-Atlantic literatures and exemplified in their countless excellent translation has won for them the undisputed leadership in race psychology. It is this versatility, this international comprehensiveness which makes their language the most representative and consequently the trustworthiest interpretant of our composite nation.

We shall never know ourselves, until we fathom the recesses of our inter-European nature. A Circean Anglicizing process is not Americanization. That our latent powers may not be suppressed, we must discern and utilize the sterling qualities of every race among us. Many are the treasure chambers which the English hand has not unlocked for us. To gain access unto these, it needs a master-key wrought of German metal on the Latin anvil.

That our shrivelled buds may blossom forth and our arid plains grow green, that the melodious strains of birds before unknown may ring through wood and field, that the jubilant life about us may make our own hearts glad, we must break the spell which holds us now enthralled, we must rid this land forever of its withering monolingual blight.

It does not follow that all Americans should have a polylingual education forced upon them, for a considerable number will thrive better on a single language fare. Rather than cater to a large attendance, I would attract the greatest possible percentage of superior talent. The worth of a linguistic training depends upon the recipient's endowments, just as a tool's effectiveness is measured by the craftman's skill. When those who teach our youth, who mould our public sentiment, who create our literary values, bid a friendly but final farewell to British insularity, then the Latin-German group will have arrived at its dynamic stage.

I do not wish to be misunderstood. The Pan-European ideal to which I aspire is no more anti-English than a totality could exclude a portion of itself. Great Britain gave us much, but through no fault of hers, failed to give us everything that is rightly ours. A frank admission of this fact is not incompatible with a genuine appreciation of British institutions. Of course the English will continue as our official language, nor would the fulfillment of my fairest hopes even partially supplant it. I would not change our medium of thought but would amplify and ennoble the spirit which it breathes. Instead of having it show only the Anglican face, I would make it a true mirror disclosing in perfect outline his un-

blemished image to the Briton and the Celt, to the Teuton and the Slav. Our goal is not a second England nor a second Germany, but what our ancestry foreshadows: a harmoniously blended rejuvenated Europe. Yet the lone English mariner will ne'er secure for us this dreamed of golden fleece, for there are within our confines too many dormant forces heedless of the English call. To arouse these from their slumbers, to enlist them in our service, requires a quickening impulse from without: the electric spark ignited by the superinducing action of the Latin and the German.

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## **Berichte und Notizen.**

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### **I. Der deutsche Volksschullehrer in unseren grösseren Städten.**

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Von **Anton Heim**, Public Schools, Milwaukee.

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(Fortsetzung.)

In der am 8. Mai in Milwaukee stattgefundenen Versammlung der neu-sprachlichen Lehrer des Staates Wisconsin wurde ausschliesslich der disziplinarische und ästhetische Wert des fremdsprachlichen Unterrichts in den Mittelschulen und damit seine Existenzberechtigung in diesen Institutionen hervorgehoben, der Hauptzweck dieses Unterrichtszweiges jedoch, der lebendige Sprachgebrauch wurde ausser acht gelassen. Da der fremdsprachliche Unterricht nur in einer ganz beschränkten Anzahl von Schulsystemen nach untenhin erweitert ist, ja in vielen Mittelschulen sogar mit einer zweijährigen Studiumzeit abgefertigt wird, so konnte allerdings nur von den genannten Berechtigungsgründen die Rede sein, obwohl Geistesdisziplin und auch Ästhetik durch andere Lehrmittel gewiss ebenso schnell und erfolgreich und dazu mit geringerem Kostenaufwand übermittelt werden können. Der letztere Punkt ist doch schliesslich für den Geschäftssinn des Amerikaners der ausschlaggebende. Dem praktischen Denker wird der Umstand, dass mit der Erlernung einer oder mehrerer Fremdsprachen sich ein weiteres Tätigkeitsfeld unserem Geschäftsleben und der Technik eröffnet, bei weitem eher einleuchten, und besonders zu einer Zeit, in der man anlässlich des europäischen Konfliktes mit der Eroberung des Weltmarktes liebäugelt. Beherrschung der Fremdsprache, hochentwickeltes Sprachgefühl, sollte die Lösung unserer Sprachlehrer sein, und damit Ausbau des fremdsprachlichen Unterrichts nach untenhin.

Wenn Deutschland in einer erstaunlich kurzen Zeit seinen Rivalen auf kaufmännischem und industriellem Gebiete den Rang ablaufen konnte, so ist das nicht in letzter Linie auf den gründlichen Ausbau seines fremdsprachlichen Unterrichts zurückzuführen, der es einerseits dem deutschen Kaufmanne ermöglichte, sich in die Gunst ausländischer Handelsleute zu setzen, andererseits dem deutschen Techniker eine Handhabe bot, mit deren Hilfe er sich auf kürzestem Wege sämtliche technischen Errungenschaften anderer Nationen aneignen vermochte.

In allen gesunden Schulsystemen unseres Landes hat man sich bestrebt, der Unzulänglichkeit, die eine kurze Studiumzeit einer Fremdsprache in sich birgt,